

In the Claims

Please amend the claims as follows:

1. (original) A transaxle assembly comprising:
a first transaxle housing having a bottom portion with a first opening formed therein;
a second transaxle housing having a bottom portion with a second opening formed therein; and
a plate secured to both the first and second transaxle housings, wherein the plate closes and seals the first and second openings.
2. (original) A transaxle assembly as set forth in claim 1, wherein the first transaxle housing contains a hydrostatic transmission with at least one output shaft extending from the housing.
3. (original) A transaxle assembly as set forth in claim 1, wherein the second transaxle housing contains a hydrostatic transmission with at least one output shaft extending from the housing.
4. (original) A transaxle assembly as set forth in claim 1, wherein the plate further comprises at least one portion extending generally perpendicular to the portion that closes and seals the housing openings.
5. (original) A transaxle assembly as set forth in claim 4, wherein the perpendicular portion comprises slots with a longitudinal direction perpendicular to the portion that closes and seals the housing openings.
6. (original) A vehicle comprising:
a vehicle frame;

a first transaxle housing secured to the vehicle frame and having a first transmission mounted therein;

a first output shaft extending from the first housing;

a second transaxle housing secured to the vehicle frame and having a second transmission mounted therein;

a second output shaft extending from the second housing; and

a plate extending in a plane generally parallel to and offset vertically from the output shafts, such that the plate is below the first and second transaxle housings and wherein the plate is attached to both housings.

7. (original) A vehicle as set forth in claim 6, wherein the output shafts are co-linear and extend away from each other.

8. (original) A vehicle as set forth in claim 6, wherein the first and second transmissions are hydrostatic transmissions.

9. (original) A vehicle as set forth in claim 6, wherein the plate comprises means for attaching to the first and second transaxle housings in a plurality of positions.

10. (presently amended) A vehicle as set forth in claim [9] 6, wherein the plate further comprises means of attaching the plate to the vehicle frame.

11. (original) A vehicle as set forth in claim 10, wherein the frame attachment means comprises a plurality of holes.

12. (presently amended) A vehicle as set forth in claim [4] 6, wherein the plate further comprises a tab portion extending at an angle from the plate and having means of attaching the plate to a vehicle frame formed thereon.
13. (original) A vehicle as set forth in claim 12, wherein the tab portion further comprises a plurality of openings for vehicle linkages.
14. (original) A transaxle assembly comprising a generally flat plate with a plurality of attachment features for mounting the plate to two separate transaxle housings with oppositely extending axles, wherein the plate extends generally below both of the transaxle housings.
15. (original) A method of forming two separate transaxles into a single assembly, the method comprising assembling a generally flat plate to two transaxles such that the two transaxles are generally positioned above the plate, and connecting the plate to both transaxles.
16. (original) The method of claim 15, wherein the plate comprises clearance slots for linkages.
17. (original) The method of claim 16, wherein the plate further comprises a portion extending vertically from a generally flat portion to provide a debris shield for the transaxles.